



*News From*

# **Maggie Brooks**

## *Monroe County Executive*

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **BROOKS UNVEILS 2007 MONROE COUNTY BUDGET**

*Third Consecutive Balanced Budget Rejects Property Tax Hike;  
Maintains Quality-of-Life and Vital Services*

Stating that “*we have worked together to make County government leaner and more efficient*”, **Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks** presented her third Monroe County Budget this evening before an audience in the Monroe County Legislative Chambers. Totaling \$877,667,012, the County Executive’s operating budget is balanced, rejects an increase in the property tax, and maintains funding for vital services.

Non-mandated spending amounts to \$213,872,094 in the 2007 proposed budget, with mandated spending at \$663,804,918.

#### **Rejects Property Tax Hike**

For the third straight year, the County Executive rejected calls to raise the Property Tax above its current level of \$9.10. By rejecting a property tax hike and providing vital services in a cost-effective manner, County Executive Brooks has again demonstrated her commitment to continuing the fine quality-of-life Monroe County residents enjoy.

*“Higher property taxes mean fewer jobs, less economic investment, the loss of young people from our region, and a steady decline in quality of life”,* County Executive **Brooks** stated. *“I will continue to protect property owners with a stable tax rate going forward.”*

#### **Resolves the 2007 Budget Gap**

County Executive Brooks was able to close a projected \$45.7 million deficit in this year’s budget through strong cost control and one-time measures.

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## 2007 Budget

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- The 2007 budget includes 40 recommendations proposed by the Budget Advisory Team...initiatives that reflect a \$33.5 million dollar benefit to taxpayers.
- The budget also eliminates 30 County positions.
- The County's workforce has been reduced by more than 11% since 2001, and the County maintains a hiring freeze for non-essential positions.
- Discretionary spending is down \$1.6 million dollars from the original forecast.
- The County will also pre-pay pension costs removing \$15 million dollars from the 2007 budget.
- And the County is anticipating almost \$23 million dollars in additional revenue in 2007 from initiatives such as the community use of the County's fiber optic network, support of the *Renew Monroe* program in the County Clerk's Office, and green energy generated from the Mill Seat landfill.

*"These are important changes that will control costs and balance the budget without compromising the high level of service individuals and families have come to expect from the County,"* **Brooks** continued.

### **Implements Budget Reform**

Monroe County has traditionally depended on grant monies being delivered following the budget's passage. Utilizing the software system Systems, Applications, & Programs (SAP), Monroe County will be able to more clearly account and designate grant funds received and expended as part of the budget. SAP is utilized by Fortune 500 companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Verizon, and is well-known for its clarity and accuracy in financial reporting.

The utilization of this cutting-edge technology will provide the maximum in County reimbursements for mandated services provided, and will provide Monroe County further opportunities to streamline County finances, both this year, and in the years to come. Utilizing this system, Monroe County has designated a separate budget line entitled the "Grants Budget". This budget line totaling \$147,373,549 reflects federal and state grants received and spent on mandated services such as public health, welfare and law enforcement.

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### Medicaid

Brooks pointed to Medicaid costs as the single largest barrier to achieving permanent fiscal solvency, and the main cause of the County's reoccurring structural gap.

*"County Medicaid costs rose a staggering 51% between 2001 and 2006, and sales tax revenues essentially flatlined...rising an anemic 9% during the same period of time," Brooks continued. "The result is a Medicaid gap rising at nearly six times the growth of sales tax revenue...leaving a \$42-million dollar gap between the cost of Medicaid and the dollars we have to pay for the program. That gap is the barrier between crisis and stability."*

### Solving the Structural Gap

Brooks noted that her administration has consistently upheld its obligations to property taxpayers by providing a responsive, open government that operates at the lowest-possible cost.

*"We have kept faith with property taxpayers," Brooks stated. "We have met the challenge of rising costs and increased Albany demands on our budget with fiscal restraint, controlled spending and without massive cuts that would threaten the safety and well-being of our community."*

Despite the commitment kept to property taxpayers, Monroe County is faced with a long-term projected structural deficit exceeding \$100,000,000. Brooks noted that a deficit of this magnitude would threaten our quality of life, hurt our ability to create jobs and grow the economy, and eventually have a devastating effect on this County's ability to provide basic services to our residents.

*"I will not turn my back on a true community solution that removes the threat of property tax increases, that improves our county's jobs climate, that improves the County's credit rating, that rebuilds our reserves, that allows for less borrowing...all while eliminating the largest mandated expense, Medicaid, from the backs of County property taxpayers and employers....forever," Brooks concluded.*

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